



**U.S. Department of Justice**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Thursday, November 16, 2006**

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**FORMER NURSE INDICTED FOR FRAUD**

Lisa Godbey Wood, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia, announced today the return of a five (5) count indictment on November 16, 2006 by the federal grand jury sitting in Savannah against Debbie R. Brannen of Glennville, Georgia. The Defendant is charged with three (3) counts of mail fraud in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1341 and two (2) counts of theft from program receiving federal funds in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 666.

The indictment arises out of an investigation into the Patient Assistance Program at East Georgia Healthcare Center, a non-profit medical facility with locations in Swainsboro, Reidsville and Soperton, Georgia. Through the Patient Assistance Program, pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors provide free or reduced price medications to indigent patients of East Georgia Healthcare Center. The indictment alleges that from January 2004 through August 2006, while a nurse with East Georgia Healthcare Center, Defendant Brannen stole medications received for free through the Patient Assistance Program, which she then sold to others. The Indictment also alleges Defendant Brannen fraudulently applied for and received medication through the Patient Assistance Program for persons ineligible to receive such free medications, including medications for herself, family members and others.

If convicted, each mail fraud count has a maximum statutory penalty of not more than twenty (20) years imprisonment; a fine of not more than \$250,000; and, not more than three (3) years of supervised release. Each count charging the violation of Theft from Program Receiving Federal Funds

has a maximum statutory penalty of not more than ten (10) years imprisonment; a fine of not more than \$250,000; and, not more than three (3) years of supervised release.

Ms. Wood stressed that an indictment is only an accusation and is not evidence of guilt. The Defendant is entitled to a fair trial, during which it will be the Government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The investigation was conducted by agents with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General; the Federal Bureau of Investigations; and the U. S. Food and Drug Administration, Office of Inspector General. The Government is represented by Jim Durham, Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia.

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